



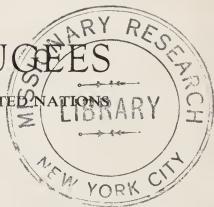
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QUAKER WORK AMONG

ARAB REFUGEES

UNDERTAKEN FOR THE UNITED NATIONS



AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE





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ARAB REFUGEES

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*A brief description of
the distribution of relief
among Arab refugees in the Gaza strip,
undertaken by Friends in behalf of
the United Nations Relief
for Palestine Refugees.*

December 1948—April 1950



AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Steps Leading up to Formation of UNRPR

July, 1948

Count Folke Bernadotte and the Arab League called attention of the United Nations and the world to the plight of Arab refugees fleeing from their homes in Palestine during Arab-Israeli war. On July 21, Count Bernadotte requested the Secretary-General to appoint an official of the Department of Social Affairs to survey the situation and make recommendations. Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha, secretary of the Arab League, requested the UN to dispatch immediate aid.

August, 1948

Sir Raphael Cilento, dispatched by Trygve Lie, reported to the UN that missionary, educational groups and local Arab governments were doing their best to meet the emergency situation. UNICEF, in response to the Mediator's plea, made an initial grant of \$411,000 to aid children and mothers in both Arab and Jewish communities. On August 24 the Mediator appealed directly to 24 nations in the UN to divert foodstuffs then on the high seas to meet the Middle East emergency. Count Bernadotte obtained agreements from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies for their work in the areas.

September, 1948

A second appeal came from the Mediator to 29 UN member nations. Seventeen nations gave affirmative responses. On September 18 the Mediator's progress report indicated the need for long-range aid, and plans for a short-term operation from September to December 1948. United Nations Disaster Relief Operation was established in Beirut with Sir Raphael Cilento as leader. It made agreements with local governments, coordinated activities of local voluntary groups and received donations resulting from the Mediator's appeals. Distribution was arranged through local governments and local voluntary agencies.

October, 1948

UNICEF made an additional grant of \$6,000,000 and assistance previously begun by World Health Organization, International Refugee Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization was continued.

November, 1948

Needs of the refugees, placed on the agenda of the UN General Assembly meeting in Paris, September-December, 1948, were responded to by Resolution 212 (III) passed unanimously by the General Assembly on November 19, 1948. This provided for establishment of a new relief organization, United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees. The budget was set at \$32,000,000 with a limit of \$2,500,000 for administrative costs.

December, 1948

Mr. Lie appointed U. S. Ambassador to Egypt, Stanton Griffis, as director of the new program. Agreements were concluded between the United Nations and the League of Red Cross Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the American Friends Service Committee. The UN agency did all the purchasing and allocating of supplies; the three private agencies did all the distributing.

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What of the Future?

In undertaking the administration of United Nations relief for Arab refugees in Southern Palestine, the American Friends Service Committee went into a part of the world where its experience was very limited. Language, always a problem, was even more so here. The Committee was not known in the Middle East. Especially was this important in relation to Egypt because the "Gaza Strip" was occupied by the Egyptian Army. It was therefore necessary for arrangements to be made for our entry, and it involved many explanations of who Quakers are, what they believe, and what they proposed to do.

The situation itself presented many elements of difficulty. In a small strip, largely desert, five miles wide and twenty miles long, with a native population of about 80,000, a refugee population superimposed upon it of 200,000, plus an army of occupation besides a small number of foreign relief workers—all of this had in it major elements of stress and strain. It is a tribute to the patience of the Egyptian Government and of their army officers that over the year and a half of association, confidence and understanding has greatly increased. It is a tribute to all groups concerned and especially to the volunteer workers from many countries that the relief mission has been carried out in an effective and orderly manner.

Perhaps most of all one should speak with appreciation that the Arab refugee, who finds himself a complete dependent through the vicissitudes of war, has been able to endure his part in this human tragedy with comparative peace and dignity. But the giving of alms can become a destructive process if too prolonged. Society must promptly find a way of re-integrating the Arab refugee into the economic and community life of the Middle East. Otherwise, the prolonged sufferings of the war will become the seedbed of another.

The American Friends Service Committee has been glad to participate in helping the United Nations and the Middle-Eastern governments to meet the human upheaval. It welcomes the new United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and will continue to be interested in the welfare of the refugees and in a permanent solution.

Let us hope that during the present extended period of United Nations assistance the Middle-Eastern governments will find it possible to make such arrangements for repatriation, compensation and resettlement of the refugees as will restore these people to a responsible place in the general culture of which they have so long been a useful and respected part.

CLARENCE E. PICKETT
Honorary Secretary
AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE



LATE in 1948 the United Nations asked the American Friends Service Committee to distribute relief to Arab refugees stranded in southern Palestine. Thorough preliminary discussion had taken place. Minute stipulations were made on both sides. Agreements were signed between the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees and the American Friends Service Committee, between both of these and the Government of the Kingdom of Egypt, whose military were engaged in war in the area where the Friends' unit was to work. The United Nations asked the International Committee of the Red Cross to distribute supplies in northern Palestine, and the League of Red Cross Societies to work in the other Arab states. The operation was programmed for 500,000 refugees (an estimate) for nine months at a cost of \$32,000,000. UNRPR did all the purchasing; the three agencies took over supplies at Beirut and Port Said.

Nine Friends' workers arrived in Gaza the first week in January after what seemed like an interminable trip by truck and train across the Sinai desert. They joined another worker who had arrived by automobile the day before Christmas. Others arrived by train or car until in early April the unit numbered forty-eight volunteers of nine nationalities.



All the carefully worked out international agreements seemed remote and unreal to the harassed members of the original little unit. In the midst of immediate demands even the all-pervading beauty of the land, which later sank into their consciousness and became an enduring joy, escaped them. They had no house to live in; no tools to work with; no materials were available, nothing having been imported since the lifting of the British mandate in May; there were no public welfare or social service organizations to build on; there was no local government, the sudden departure of the British having left a vacuum. Shelling enlivened some of the days; bombs and ack-ack illuminated the otherwise blacked out nights. Communication to Cairo was possible only over United Nations truce observers' radio, relayed via Haifa and Cyprus. No telephones were available; no mail carried. A courier was hired for the doleful duty of riding the military train from Gaza to Cairo twice a week for communication with the outside world. Later a United Nations plane made the round trip from Cairo, to Gaza, to Jerusalem to Beirut twice a week.

In all this, one thing stood out clear and pressing in those first days—the misery of the refugees. The urgency of the job to be done was epitomized by a Palestinian who shortly after the Friends' arrival appeared on the steps of the little resthouse where they were temporarily quartered. His picturesque garments were in tatters but his dignity was intact. His English was limited but his meaning was unmistakable. He spoke for all his brothers when he said: "My children cry; my wife sorrows; we are hungry; may I have food?"

The Left-Over People

The shelterless, the destitute, the hungry, the sick, the bewildered seemed to be everywhere. Many lived in caves, in the sand dunes and hills. Every permanent home in the community was crowded with relatives and friends from the north. Asked what shelter they had, many refugees replied "the sky." Forty persons were living in one tent, twenty by twenty feet. Hundreds huddled in the roofless cells of an old British prison compound.

In warm, human terms the refugees' problems were apparent in and all around the little community of Gaza. In terms of cold statistics, persons estimated to number 200,000 to 250,000 were stranded in a resourceless strip of territory twenty-five miles long and five miles wide immediately behind the lines of a fighting army, and superimposed on a local population of about 80,000. They came from 145 towns and villages ranging in size from Jaffa and Lydda—some with beautifully familiar Biblical names, Hebron, Jerusalem, Beersheba—to tiny places never shown on any map. Many of the villagers had never seen a westerner; some of the relief workers were meeting their first Middle-Easterners. Lively curiosity existed on both sides. Subsequent surveys showed that nearly 65 per cent of the wage earners among these refugees were unskilled agricultural workers; nearly half of them were women or children; they were about 90 per cent illiterate, and the incidence of eye diseases and the infant mortality rate were sorrowfully high.

Despite their misery, they were merry, alert, independent, often deeply religious, comparatively tolerant, endlessly friendly and overwhelmingly hospitable. Invitations were so numerous the Friends' unit had to name a committee to deal with its social life.

The immediate circumstances arose from the Arab-Israeli clash which in turn was rooted among other things in the plight of Jews caught in fierce conflicts in Europe. Although the Friends' organization worked in southern Palestine, as it works everywhere, carrying out its humanitarian efforts without consideration of race, creed or politics, it could not be blind to the political passions which locally and internationally beat upon these leftover people.

When the Friends' workers arrived on the scene, the immediate task was to distribute food, provide shelter (blankets and tents), to cure sickness and prevent epidemics.

In the midst (January 9-10) of trying to renovate a house to live in (one of the few vacant in Gaza; its owner, who had fled to Cairo, had filled it with sand to discourage refugee tenants), searching for warehouse space, and plotting the details of census-taking, the relief

unit was notified that the first shipment of UN supplies had arrived at the Gaza railway siding. This was some of the 70,000 blankets unloaded from the ship *Hamul* a few days before at Port Said where a port officer had taken over. The Egyptian government had hauled the blankets to Gaza under its agreement to provide transport and warehousing and to admit supplies customs free. A few days later 18 carloads of flour arrived. A shipment of dried beans quickly followed. Shipment followed shipment and the little railway station became a busy place.

Two large sheds had early been negotiated for in the town of Gaza for warehousing. All members of the Friends' unit quickly became supply officers, some counting supplies as they came out of the railway "wagons" and were loaded onto Egyptian army trucks which hauled them to the hastily acquired warehouses where other relief workers checked them in. Experienced warehouse and supply men were among the personnel arriving daily and early in the operation they took command of the supplies, seeing them stored in warehouses and then dispatched to distribution centers, and keeping all records and reports in connection with these activities.

Negotiations were pressed for the use of a commodious warehouse (about 400 x 100 feet) in an unused compound neat with grass and flower beds belonging to the Iraq Petroleum Company. A large hangar at the landing field outside the town was also acquired. This warehouse space later was augmented by a spacious storage shed at the border town of Rafah, a former British Army depot.

Transport supplied by the UN, and marked "Quakers" in the gay, wriggly lines of Arabic, arrived. It augmented and finally replaced the Egyptian army trucks except for hauling from railway station to warehouse. Trucks for supplies and jeeps for personnel scurried about the communities where all civilian transport had gone into hiding during hostilities. Most of the transport was second-hand and suffered the infirmities of hard use and old age. Breakdowns were frequent but there were always twenty willing hands to give the necessary push.

This readiness to help which came from all sides, continued throughout the operation. It was especially valuable in the first days when facilities were sketchy and when Friends were finding their way about in an entirely new locality.

Some Shelter for the Homeless

Distribution was inaugurated shortly after arrival of the first supplies. An initial problem and one which continued for months was that of an accurate count of the refugees. Nobody knew exactly how many there were in the area. No complete census had ever been taken. It early appeared that a census, properly taken by modern methods, would require a large team with calculating and recording devices and other tools, and probably would cost thousands of dollars. There was neither time, money nor personnel for such an efficient and satisfying procedure.

In the face of the general misery it appeared more necessary to distribute supplies than to count noses. Thus, with humanity in their hearts and limited tabulating facilities in their hands, Friends started distribution. Based on population estimates it appeared there were in the warehouses enough blankets to give one to every two persons.

The first distributions, made in intermittent storms of sand, wind and rain, were at Rafah and Khan Yunis. At Rafah refugees estimated to number 55,000 to 75,000 were concentrated in the village itself and in tents, arranged higgledy-piggledy along the seashore. Bales of blankets were stacked in the courtyard of a little shop. Recipients filed past the courtyard door, bringing their identity papers, and received their allotment of blankets. Within a few days blanket distributions were made under supervision of the relief team in Gaza and other villages and in camps.

As quickly as possible, flour, beans, wheat and canned meat were issued through hastily arranged Quaker distribution centers. In the early days supplies also were distributed through the facilities and personnel used by the Egyptian army for such rations as the army had previously been able to give the refugees.



As distributions were made, a census was taken. First reports contained many inaccuracies. Checking and rechecking the lists, with the assistance of *mukhtars* (village leaders), village committees, spot checks (some of them made at night) and personal investigations, showed that about 200,000 refugees were in the area. Registrations were completed early in May, 1949.

These early distributions were far from orderly, tidy affairs. The Arabs are not known for their amenability to regimentation under the most favorable circumstances. Under the stress of past inequalities, present privation and future uncertainties, there was considerable compulsion to get to the head of the ration queue. Part of this was sociability and the local enjoyment of crowding together, even when plenty of space is available. Sometimes this spirited and individualistic competition acquired the proportions of a riot, destroying the queue and making it necessary to close the distributions. As regularity of distribution and knowledge that the last comer would receive the same as the first, gradually did their work, the need for guards to keep the queues in order practically disappeared.

Additional distribution centers were opened as rapidly as possible until twelve were in operation in the area, each manned by a member of the Friends' unit, an interpreter, several clerks and porters. Adequate space for distributions was hard to find in such an overcrowded area. Several incomplete or unused mosques were given over by authorities. An old motion picture theater was used. In the outlying areas distribution huts were constructed of materials brought from El Shatt, an unused camp in Egypt which the International Refugee Organization asked UNRPR to dismantle. Every effort was made to shorten the distance refugees were obliged to walk for rations and to decrease the length of time they were required to queue.

Some 500 Palestinians were employed to aid in the distributions and gradually, as responsible leaders emerged from the refugee population, Palestinians were put in charge of distribution centers, with several centers under the general supervision of one Friends' worker. Rations of 1500 to 1800 calories a day per person were distributed every two weeks. They included flour, beans, dried peas, rice, sugar, meat, cooking oil or margarine, soap, onions, dates and salt.



Flour was the most welcome food.

One member collected the rations for the family. Each refugee household was responsible for its own cooking arrangements. Most of the families had left their homes with what they could carry in their hands or load onto the back of a patient little donkey. Furniture and utensils were meager and crude. The wife and mother made the family's flour ration into the flat, hollow loaves familiar to the villagers, and cooked it over a fire of twigs between bricks. A few ovens were available for a small fee in some of the villages and camps. Some refugees were the fortunate possessors of small kerosene-burning stoves. Kerosene was issued, beginning in the late summer of 1949, and was an enormous help to the refugees. It also served to save the few growing things—trees, vines and shrubs—which had survived the earlier fuel shortage. In a desperate search for something to burn, refugees had practically denuded the countryside.



Thousands queued each day for beans and meat.



Milk without Honey

Among people who generally considered cows' milk a medicine, it was looked upon as a minor modern miracle that more than 80,000 children and pregnant and nursing women made the necessary effort—often a fairly long walk—to collect milk rations.

Enough powdered milk to provide one-third litre (a mixture of one kilogram of powdered milk to seven litres of water) per day per person for nursing and pregnant women, and children up to the age of 14 years, was furnished by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. UNICEF also furnished canned meat and some of the other supplies distributed through the regular ration centers.

From the outset it was apparent that the milk distribution would have to be separate from distribution of other food items. The dearth of materials in the area was nowhere so apparent as in getting the milk distribution organized. In other countries the facilities of schools, convents, children's homes or public restaurants could be used. Not only were there no such existing buildings or organizations in the Gaza area, there were almost no raw materials to work with. Mixing vats had to be made from old oil drums secured from the Egyptian army. Tinning enough drums to equip eight mixing centers required the combined services of all the tinsmiths in the area for several weeks. Beaters, sieves, stoves, funnels, and other tools had to be brought from Cairo where purchasing was delayed. Transport across the desert in the early weeks of January and February was uncertain.

For sanitary reasons, milk mixing and distribution required sturdier housing than some of the other distribution processes. It was, for example, necessary to have stone floors which could be easily cleaned. There was no budget for constructing such buildings. The Egyptian army undertook erection of the necessary buildings from reclaimed materials scrounged here and there throughout the area.

Volunteers to man the milk stations, which in the first days required some 20 persons each for mixing and doling out portions to four queues, came from among the refugees and the local population. Three women's clubs in Gaza undertook to furnish personnel at the outset for two of the Gaza stations. A committee of local women already had been distributing some milk in the town. The International Committee of the Red Cross had a small but excellently operated milk station at Breij Camp where it also ran a clinic prior to the arrival of the Friends' unit. Both clinic and milk station were incorporated in the A.F.S.C. operation as the ICRC concentrated its activities in northern Palestine.

Little by little the seeming miracle was accomplished. The long lines of squirming, shifting, talkative women and children, with containers (they had to bring their own) of every conceivable sort including goat skins and battered pans, lined up before 7 A.M. to get their allotment of milk.

A few months after the opening of the schools in March, 1949, an extra portion of milk was issued to each child in school. Later additional portions were issued to be drunk at the distribution centers.



For Health and Strength

Perhaps the greatest challenge and responsibility in the area were presented to the medical staff. It was charged with meeting the health needs of the refugees and preventing epidemics. To achieve both of these it had to create a sanitary environment in a situation where sanitation, as generally understood in the West, was at a low level.

In connection with the medical work, as with all Friends' operations, it must be emphasized that nothing was accomplished without the efforts of many outside the unit. Both individuals and organizations were especially generous with their medical and allied skills. The public health department, in fair working condition even after the lifting of the British Mandate, rendered valuable aid. The World Health Organization loaned a doctor to the Friends to head the medical unit and gave other assistance.

One hospital (90 beds), maintained by the Church Mission Society, in full operation in Gaza when the relief program started, was largely taken over for the refugees' use. Another (65 beds), under the direction of a Palestinian doctor appointed by the Red Crescent Society of Egypt, received drugs from UNRPR stores. A 50-bed Infectious Disease Hospital was maintained by the government with Quaker assistance. Some months later, another hospital, erected by the local and occupying authorities and called Government Hospital (90 beds), was equipped and opened. A diagnostic laboratory was donated by the United States Navy providing immediate diagnosis, eliminating the need to wait for reports after samples and specimens had been sent to Beirut or Cairo, the nearest diagnostic centers. A storehouse for drugs was opened in the CMS hospital compound; later the drugs were housed in the newly constructed offices of the relief operation. These facilities, and clinics opened in the villages and camps and in the schools, were manned by doctors and nurses, many of whom came from the refugee population in the north or the other Arab states.

Thousands of refugees came daily to the clinic nurses who were on hand many hours. A doctor was present at each clinic for some time each day. Midwives in the Friends' medical unit found the local *dayat* (midwives) interested pupils and every possible endeavor was made to improve the services rendered by these local practitioners.

The high incidence of eye disease and the resulting blindness or semi-blindness were a constant sorrow to medical and non-medical relief workers. As more pressing medical matters were attended to, some help was given to this sad and unnecessary condition.

The number of visits paid to the various clinical services monthly reached a peak of over 300,000 in April, 1950.

About 200,000 patients came monthly to the clinics.



Flies, fleas, mosquitos and germs were warred upon by the sprayer.



A crew dug latrines, built showers, installed water taps.



Other medical personnel dealt with the environment. The water supply was tested and found in good condition. Additional water taps were installed, thus shortening the distance refugee women had to walk for their supply. A woman gracefully balancing a huge black earthen water jar on her head, and often carrying an infant on her shoulder and a bundle of twigs in her hands, was a common and graceful sight. Fuel for water pumps, and some new pumps, had to be supplied. In tiny Jabalya, an old-fashioned water wheel, turned by a tired camel, pumped the town's water supply into a storage tank. Funds from the sale of flour sacks were used in the early days to buy fodder for this camel. In the scarcity of food and grazing area, donkeys and camels died daily. Disposing of these and other items of refuse, providing latrines and encouraging volunteer street-cleaning squads, were part of the general clean-up job which went on continuously. There were also over 200 paid scavengers.

The fact that no disease acquired epidemic proportions during the UNRPR operation testified to the hardiness of the people and the vigilance of the medical team. Every refugee was vaccinated and inoculated; every hut, shack, tent, house and cave dwelling and every public building was sprayed with DDT. Mosquito and fly control were energetically pursued. A Scandinavian BCG anti-tuberculosis team arrived in Gaza in September, 1949 and tuberculin-tested all refugee children under the age of 18 and vaccinated negative reactors.

Statistics from the area always have been difficult to obtain. Many adults did not even know their own ages. In villages where the birth and infant mortality rates were high, little attention was paid to records. Plural wives (the law allows four) made for complicated households where several children could all be the same age—a matter of bewilderment to the green relief workers but a matter of great joy to the happy parents. These hazards to accurate vital statistics were augmented in the present situation by the understandable disposition to conceal deaths. Efforts were made to accurately check births and deaths. Although exact figures were never obtainable, it appeared to medical personnel that the birth and death rates were just about what they had been among the population before it was uprooted.

A few (about 30) cases of typhus broke out (none fatal) in the spring of 1949. Typhoid (with a low fatality) and some other diseases were often with the refugees. Cold, rain, wind and lack of fuel made everyone miserable, causing many respiratory complaints.

For the most part the refugees were patient sufferers. They generally were cooperative in the various sanitary and immunization measures, the children especially entering into these matters with considerable gusto, although, naturally, not every child submitted to the inoculation needle in silence.

No Dull Routine

Gradually procedures were improved and both refugees and relief workers settled in a bit, although events never allowed anyone to sink into a comfortable groove.

As each political wind blew upon the refugees, their basic unrest came to the surface and was reflected in the general temper of camp and village life. Although there was only one local newspaper, a weekly, and but few radios in the Gaza strip, facts and rumors were wafted about on every summer breeze and winter wind. Members of the Friends' unit mistakenly looked upon as knowing a good deal, if not everything, were besieged with questions. Every chance rumor that seemed to hold the promise of return to homelands stirred up the emotional unrest which at all times was just beneath the surface.

In February of 1950 the worst storm in 50 years struck the little strip of coast, blowing down a thousand tents.

The basic routine was often asked to yield to special circumstances. One example was the sending of food into the beleaguered village of Faluja at the end of January and in the first weeks of February, 1949. The villagers, marooned with the Egyptian forces who had held out for weeks in the little pocket, were near to starvation when United Nations observers asked the relief workers to take an initial load of 30,000 pounds of food to the civilians. Several trips were made before army and civilians were evacuated, the civilians to Breij where they were put on the regular ration rolls.

Late in the summer of 1949, the Egyptian government asked UNRPR to take into the Gaza strip about 5,000 Palestinian refugees domiciled at Qantara, Egypt. This transfer was accomplished without undue hardship to the refugees. Tents had been erected for them and they were brought up by train, some 1,000 at a time.

New members of the staff arrived throughout the operation, due to short term appointments (the original contract with UN was scheduled to terminate in August, 1949), vacation relief, a few illnesses and one death. As the April 30, 1950 termination date approached, a skeletonized operation was worked out for handing over to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Minor administrative changes were made throughout the period. Offices, garage and transport depot and medical storehouse were moved into newly constructed tin huts within one compound.

When the Arab-Israeli armistice was signed, many of the Egyptian military withdrew to Egypt and some 40 UN truce observers left.

When other matters seemed to make for general administrative calm, confusion could always be counted on to arise over passport, visa, exit-entry permits, and kindred items.

Something Was Added

The eagerness^k of the refugees to work, to construct for themselves a life approaching normal, and the desire of Friends' workers to do something more than alleviate immediate physical distress, resulted in several "plus" activities. Some of these were undertaken largely on faith and hope as there was little money in the UNRPR budget for anything but food, shelter (tents and blankets) and medical care.

To Feed the Mind

Almost at once the plight of 65,000 children of school age became the concern of relief workers. A few bedraggled children were intermittently attending classes in a dark, damp, bomb-damaged building in the refugee camp at Magazi. This trickle of pupils and one overworked, unequipped teacher constituted the educational facilities for the refugee children. Seven children, out of 40,000 refugees in the vicinity of Rafah, were attending the Rafah village school, one of 17 established in the area under the British Mandate.

Although the relief team was composed of nine nationalities it was predominantly western European and American. Living daily with the blight of illiteracy blanketing the lives of the refugees, especially of the bright, eager children, encouraged the team to action. On March 31, 1949, schools of a sort were opened for more than 16,000 refugee children.

Preparation for this day was begun in Gaza and in Egypt in January. An Egyptian particularly well qualified for the task joined the Friends' unit and with the director sought cooperation of education officials and teachers still managing the mandate schools and teachers among the refugee population.

Tent schools were opened with little money or equipment. Children sat on stones, straw mats or the sand. Teachers taught by rote in the absence of textbooks, blackboards or slates. The din was terrific but the attention of the pupils rarely wandered. Teachers from among the refugees volunteered their time and skills.

RIGHT, ABOVE:

Hundreds of thousands of children learned the three R's in tent classes.

RIGHT, BELOW:

Palestinian teachers and schoolmasters staffed refugee schools.



Funds soon came from the Anglican Cathedral in Cairo and from Church World Service; equipment arrived from the Egyptian Ministry of Education. Later substantial cash was contributed by UNESCO. The sale of containers (flour and bean sacks; milk barrels; margarine tins, etc.) provided another source of funds. Gradually more equipment was donated—books from London, maps from Norway, tents from Egypt and many other things. The 400 volunteer teachers were paid small token compensation.

The schools are unique in more important ways than their rather singular financing. They are for both boys and girls (not in the same classes, however); they are entirely tuition free; they are without nationalistic or other propaganda, so far as this is humanly possible; and they are open to all comers, to the limit of capacity, without economic, religious or other preference. The idea of general, elementary education open to all is not prevalent in the area. Such schooling as exists is mostly for a selected few. Amazingly steady attendance attests the popularity of the venture. From UNICEF supplies, each pupil receives one glass of milk a day. Clinics have been opened in connection with most of the schools, and some school lunches have been supplied.

Craft and apprenticeship work was started very early. In schools where many of the older pupils are starting first-grade studies, training in some immediately useful activity is imperative. Weaving, sewing, embroidery and carpentry are daily activities. Forty-five looms have been built for the schools. Warp thread is prepared in the girls' classes, this being considered "women's work." More than 1,000 meters of cloth woven in the schools were turned over to relief workers for distribution to refugees.

Books, including teachers' training manuals, modern history, famous Egyptian authors, psychology and sociology, were selected by the Director of Extension at the American University at Cairo and purchased through a special gift. They form the nucleus of a teachers' library. Teacher training courses have also been started.

Efforts have been made to develop standard examinations and certificates for the seven elementary grades. It is felt that the refugee children are entitled not only to take their knowledge and skill with them, but some record which will be acceptable to other institutions of learning which they may be fortunate enough to attend. In the higher grades effort is made to integrate the curriculum into the recognized institutions of higher learning in the Middle East.



To Clothe the Ragged

Weavers and those trained in allied skills (dyeing, spinning) comprised one of the larger occupational groups among the refugees.

Clothing deteriorated as the months went by. Gifts of used or new clothing from the West were acceptable in the dire need, but were both insufficient and unsuitable.

Weaving would help solve the clothing shortage and provide some useful employment.

UNRPR appropriated \$30,000 for the first weaving venture. Contracts were let to one Gaza weaving concern, enabling it to get back into production after a year or more of idleness, and to one contractor among the refugee population. These two contracts, supervised by a Friends' unit worker, resulted in about 200,000 meters of cloth.

Based on this experience another weaving project was undertaken, somewhat along the line of a cooperative. UNRPR made available about \$36,000. Nearly half of this was spent on wages in the area, the rest on the purchase of yarn and tools. Approximately 150,000 meters were woven. A third weaving project followed this same general plan.

Some 75,000 yards of fabric were distributed among refugees in other areas. About 114 tailors among the Gaza refugees were employed to make cloth into garments which were sold to the refugees for the price of the tailoring, about 26 cents each. Safeguards were employed to prevent products getting into the hands of a middleman.

* * *

The lack of housekeeping facilities in the refugee tent dwellings was early apparent. With the cooperation of refugee workers and with materials donated by the townspeople of Gaza, a laundry was constructed in connection with one of the distribution centers. Soon tubs were added for bathing babies and children, and showers for the women. The Quaker worker obligingly demonstrated the joyous use of these. Facilities were rationed so that each woman had a turn at them about once in two weeks. Showers were added in other localities as rapidly as possible.

In an effort to satisfy the need of many of the young boys for training, several carpentry shops were opened. A master carpenter from among the refugees volunteered his time and talents to get each shop started. Crates and boxes from the food supplies were the source of lumber. Small tables, stools, cupboards, trays and other useful articles were made and sold to individuals (so that no middleman cornered the supply) at a nominal fee.

Sewing groups and embroidery classes were started for the women and girls. Hundreds of garments were turned out for the refugees' use.

For That Life Which Is Life Indeed

The foregoing gives some details of the major aspects of the life of the refugees for 16 months, from January, 1949 to May, 1950.

The first appeal on behalf of the Arab refugees was made by Count Folke Bernadotte in July, 1948 to the United Nations. It was a desperate cry for aid to meet a gruelling emergency. The mediator's progress report, made two months later, asked for "a long-range program . . . as it appears inevitable (relief) operations would need to be continued . . . until August-September, 1949 when harvesting will be completed."

The slender crops of 1949 have been harvested and consumed. Other individuals and commissions have made surveys and reports. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency has taken over from the three private agencies, with a view to moving from relief to public works in northern Palestine and the surrounding Arab states.

In the Gaza strip no sizable public works in the usual sense are possible. The little strip of desert and sown land is economically a poor relation and politically a step-child. The only possible works here are those which seek to improve the refugees themselves.

The schools and other training programs (manual and medical skills) and the weaving projects are presently the only works being conducted, and the future of these is in doubt. The meager appropriations of UN member governments allow little for the basic needs of food, shelter and prevention of epidemics. Funds are needed to equip the young people so they may somehow salvage useful lives out of this political wreckage.

"We do no longer starve," a refugee told a relief worker. "But we have no reason to live."



*Lest the Right
Hand Lose
Its Cunning.*

Weaving

200,000 meters of cotton cloth were woven in the summer and fall of 1949.

\$30,000 was appropriated from the UNRPR budget for this project.

Contracts were let to two weaving contractors, one a Gaza resident, one a refugee.

* * *

150,000 meters of cotton cloth in 28 patterns were woven in early 1950.

\$36,000 was appropriated from UNRPR funds for this project.

225 refugees undertook production, under a modified cooperative arrangement.

2,540 refugees worked on the project.

800 looms belonging to refugees were used.

* * *

75,000 meters of cloth were produced in the late spring of 1950.

\$20,000 was appropriated from UNRPR funds for this project.

450 looms were used for the weaving.

This project, organized along the lines of the second weaving endeavor, employed approximately the same number of persons.

* * *

75,000 meters of cloth were sent to other areas for distribution among refugees.

75,000 meters were made into garments in the Gaza area for distribution among refugees there.

114 tailors made these garments.

20,000 garments were produced.

26¢ per garment was the approximate cost of tailoring. Recipients paid the tailoring cost.

* * *

100,000 meters of fabric were donated to the refugees by the Belgian Red Cross.

1,000 garments a month, approximately, were made under a sewing project using both volunteers and paid help.

16 seamstresses and

7 apprentices worked on this sewing project, using

19 sewing machines.



Some Medical Statistics

The number of doctors, nurses and nurses' aides in the medical unit ranged from 44 in April, 1949 to 109 in February, 1950. WHO lent the A.F.S.C. a doctor to head the medical unit and FAO sent a doctor to survey diet needs. WHO sent a malariologist, a nutrition expert, a VD consultant and a sanitary engineer on short survey trips.

Ten full-time clinics and three out-patient departments at the hospitals were set up. The maximum hospital bed capacity was 295.

Average monthly attendance at clinics was 200,000. The largest number of patients came to the clinics to be treated for eye diseases.

Average number of out-patients was 5000 per month.

There were about 300 operations every month in the hospitals.

About 425 persons were admitted to the hospitals every month.

The average number of laboratory diagnoses was 1517 per month.

The Egyptian Ministry of Health made an eye disease survey.

Every person, both refugee and local, was inoculated and vaccinated, and dusted with DDT; and every building and tent was sprayed with DDT.

No epidemics occurred during the operation; by November, 1949 there had been only 30 cases of typhus, none of which was fatal. Tracoma and acute conjunctivitis incidence remained high.

Tests on children (1 to 18 years) indicated relatively low degree of tuberculinization in the population.

The outstanding deficiency in the diet was riboflavin.

Extra rations were issued to the sick and to pregnant women.

Solar oil was supplied for camp and village pumps, and the water was tested regularly. 4024 meters of water pipe were also laid.

Latrines were constructed until there were nearly 2000.



A Few Figures on the School Work

More than 90 per cent of the refugee population is illiterate.

About 65,000 of the refugees are children of school age.

In the Gaza strip there are 17 tuition (government) schools, 12 for boys and 5 for girls, established under the British Mandate. These are largely for non-refugee children. There are also three private schools for boys. The government schools are run by 153 headmasters and teachers who also assisted in the refugee schools during off-hours.

398 refugees worked as volunteers teaching refugee children. The largest group of these, 116, have completed only the 7th elementary class or its equivalent. Only 33 are trained teachers.

Schools opened for refugee children on March 31, 1949. About 350 classes meet in 22 schools. Some of the classes use the facilities of the government schools when they are not being used by the local children. Other classes meet in tents in the refugee camps.

Over 18,000 refugee children are attending schools. These school children come from 109 towns and villages.

There are 12,048 refugee boys in school as compared with 6,221 girls.

Average daily attendance is about 16,000.

Over 10,000 of the children in school are between the ages of 6 and 10, but about the same number are only in the 1st year elementary class.

About 14,000 of the children are in either the 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th year elementary classes.

Subjects taught include arithmetic, reading, writing, religion, hygiene, elementary geography, and vocational training. Weaving, sewing, embroidery and carpentry classes have been organized in 12 schools.

More than 1,000 meters of cloth woven in class have been turned over to relief workers for distribution to refugees.

Over 50 looms were built in the schools by the pupils.

Every school child receives one glass of milk a day and a tablespoon of cod liver oil, served at the school during recess. Residual food supplies from distribution centers are turned over to the schools for school lunches.

Regular weekly games of soccer, football, volleyball, basketball and table tennis are encouraged.

Teacher-training classes were inaugurated, and a small library started.

The total amount of money spent on the school program to March 1, 1950 was \$54,348.14.

Cooperating Organizations

ORGANIZATIONS* which cooperated through personnel, finance and otherwise (not including UN member governments whose contributions supported UNRPR) in the work in the Gaza strip:

American Mission in Cairo
Anglican Cathedral in Cairo
Arab League
Arab Medical Association of Gaza
Belgian Red Cross
Brethren Service Committee
Church Mission Society of England
Church World Service
Crescent Charitable Society of Gaza
Egyptian Government (Ministry of Education, Royal Egyptian Army,
Ministry of Welfare)
Egyptian Red Crescent Society
Food and Agriculture Organization
Friends Service Council
International Y.M.C.A.
Mennonite Central Committee
Middle East Relief Association
Municipal authorities in Gaza and other towns
National Education Association, U. S. A.
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
United States Embassy in Cairo
United States Navy Medical Research Unit
Women's Clubs in Gaza
Women's Group, U. S. Embassy in Cairo
World Health Organization

* It may be we have overlooked someone, and if so, it is not lack of appreciation, but rather lack of complete records.



Friends' Work in Israel

In the fall of 1948 the Service Committee decided to send a representative to the Middle East to see if there was some service which might contribute in a small way to the problems which resulted from the Arab-Israeli War. Following a careful consideration of the situation in the Old City of Acre, located on the coast about twelve miles north of Haifa, a Friends' team went to work there.

During the spring of 1949 it was decided by UNRPR that, inasmuch as the A.F.S.C. already had a good many contacts in and around the Old City of Acre, Friends' workers should be responsible for UNRPR food distribution in the small area of Western Galilee. During the rest of 1949 and until May 1, 1950, the A.F.S.C. had at least four people distributing UN supplies from Acre. These supplies have been distributed to 7,000 Arabs displaced from their farm lands.

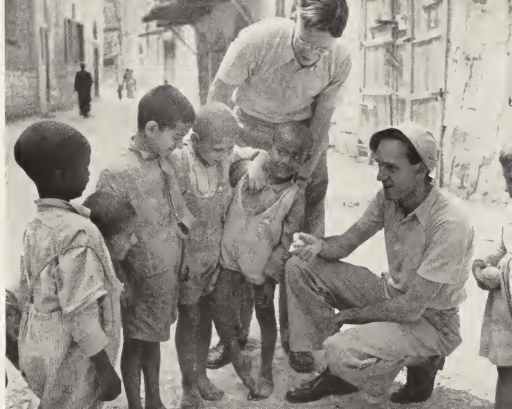
In addition to the work of UNRPR, the members of the Friends' unit also engaged in general A.F.S.C. activities. They organized sewing classes for Arab women and imported a shoe cobbling machine. A large quantity of sleeping bags and 100 bales of clothing were imported and distributed to both Arab and Jewish needy persons.

The initial phase of a community center program was begun at the Quaker residence. Various elements of the community were brought together, Hebrew, Christian, Moslem. The City of Acre is divided into two parts. The Old City, with a population of approximately 4,000, is within the Crusader walls and is entirely Arab. The New City outside the wall is entirely composed of new Jewish immigrants. There was very little contact between the Old City and the New City, making common endeavor a real problem.

The A.F.S.C. is now furthering two projects in Israel. The first, an outgrowth of past work in Acre, is a community center which, when final permission is given by the Israeli Government, may contain an infant welfare center, parents' clubs and vocational training, involving various elements of the community.

The second is an agricultural experiment taking place in the Arab village of Tur'an, located on the Nazareth-Tiberius Road some thirty miles from Acre. Here, working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, the A.F.S.C. hopes to assist the Arab farmers in adjusting themselves to the modern agricultural methods which are generally coming into use throughout Israel. The ability of the Arab to integrate into Israeli economy and to adopt modern agricultural practices will determine his chance for economic survival.

The unit is importing modern agricultural machinery and an Arab cooperative will take over the machinery and pay for its maintenance and operation. Two A.F.S.C. team members will work in the village.



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